

Mysterious Genie of Northtown

To readers and currently non-quantum AI robots: the following is a tale of Creative Non-Fiction, factually true with 47 year-old gaps of Scotch® tape here and there. Note that all names of various Homo sapiens were completely changed, except for Labrum. Enjoy.

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In the 1977 city of North Las Vegas (aka Northtown, and in the year the legendary non-CG, zero sound-edited print of the original STAR WARS was released) I hit a fairly unique experience. I was age 12. I've rarely looked back in adult days, but for some reason a woman I know (and maybe you do, too) got me to wonder if the guesses others and I made about the realities of a mysterious Northtown person were real.

At the beginning of my 7th grade season, life was more different than ever. I was actually employed (yes, at age 12) by the Las Vegas Review-Journal, selling newspaper subscriptions door-to-door all over the city. Often at night, too. Hah! It was something. Maybe a story about that someday, but the cheat is, the RJ gig allowed extra cash to buy a lovely Sankyo EM-30XL super 8mm movie camera, with a f1.5 lens, even.

So I did the first day of September 1977's 7th grade with the camera in tow. Showed it to a few new pals (male and female) and my teachers. Just so you know, Jim Bridger students at the time were both extremely and organically diverse, like the bridge of the Enterprise. Refreshing, as was all of Northtown, really. Not the nicest city but genuinely super "inclusive".

While I tossed the Sankyo around, everybody noticed someone walk by that I'd never seen before. I later discovered she was also 12, like most of us.

And yet very different, by any standard.

Her attire was impeccable. No doubt top caliber clothes, shoes, accoutrements, perhaps even Chanel. Trust me, in Northtown that was stratospheric stuff. Amazing fashion, but super low-key.

She was tall as everyone else, I suppose, with a sort of hazelnut hair that was maybe to her middle shoulder blades and shiny like some sort of cosmic wave. Clearly attractive, possibly Italian or Greek, maybe Arabic, likely mixed.

Fact is, her wardrobe and such were incredible...but her energy was the killer. Something very adult, sophisticated, obviously traveled about her. Beyond the norm. Imagine a movie character, a person highly intelligent and savvy, parents employed by MI5 of London...

Or something.

As she left the area, all of us (who'd gone stupid quiet) wondered where she came from.

We later discovered her name was Aurora Smith. She and her family got to Vegas from another city, theorized as Los Angeles or Manhattan. Nobody really knew where, not even the Jim Bridger teaching and administrative staff. Odd. And of course, stuff like this being a "secret" soon stirred the bees. Everybody was talking about her and wondering what the story was.

Aurora, on the other hand, kept completely to herself. Boys in the school were actually intimidated to approach, from her clothes and appearance. So the first day went by, and all anybody heard her say was, "I'm Aurora" — when asked by a teacher.

Like an episode of Little Rascals (aka Our Gang) the day ended and everybody ran to the exits. All the school busses were parked out front and divided by destination. Some guessed Aurora would wind-up at Nellis Air Force Base, likely the daughter of some multi-star general living in a fancy officer's house. I guessed she'd head to what was known as Renada Circle...or maybe even Rancho Circle or The Scotch 80s, the high-tier fabulous shacks in Vegas.

We were wrong.

Aurora just vanished. She didn't enter a bus, and nobody had a clue.

A school janitor was down a corridor from us, so I trotted over and asked if he'd seen the "New Girl" in the cool clothes. He had. She left from behind the school in a kind of silver car he'd never really seen before. Too far away to make it. Damn.

Well, other days, right?

The next morning all was normal for the 7th and 8th grade. Aurora arrived with extreme punctuality, again wearing an outfit like something from Paris runways, low-key yet amazing.

During the day, Aurora started talking to people who approached. It was clear she had a serious background of some kind, because it was like she spoke to her employees, or something. Very cordial, modest, cool, but no doubt way up some sort of social ladder that remained unknown.

As it goes, people started asking her questions like, how'd she get here? She wasn't massively specific, but did say her father was on The Las Vegas Strip for a while, a hotel person. She didn't say where or use his name.

She was extremely nice about it, but no question she wanted her life hidden.

And she liked being left completely alone. Not in a manner you'd call "unlikable". It was an absolutely confident thing, while she buried herself in her own thoughts. She cast a general feeling that she was at Jim Bridger beyond her personal choice. "Fish outta water" maybe, but well without arrogance or contempt.

Northtown was something she just had to do. For some reason.

As it goes, a few at school instantly didn't like her. C'est la vie. Myself I thought she was wonderfully mysterious and way advanced. As did most.

Aurora was unique. Her skin had a light olive tone and her eyes were brilliantly green, like a Russian Blue feline. No doubt she had some kind of overseas heritage, but it wasn't easily discerned. Her hair did have the hazelnut sparkle, as said before, like something made of ultra-thin silk. And her cheekbones were fairly prominent, perfectly assembled.

So the next day came, and the next, and onward. That's when we discovered she wasn't taking the bus or a silver car to or from her unknown home, but a Yellow Cab on arrival and a North Las Vegas Taxi to depart. Hm. That was über-rare in 1977, definitely not everyday.

As time continued, Aurora became a totally straight-A student, a potential valedictorian in making. Damn. No one got to know her, though. Weeks went on, and she was liked, but communication with her was minimal.

I finally (finally!) tried to talk with Aurora by showing her my Sankyo movie camera. She was fascinated by the lens assembly, and noticed it was f1.5 in rating...which I found pretty cool. So we talked about some silly stuff I'd done, actual cel animation and other things like claymation and time exposure junk with clouds. This seemed to intrigue her.

But then, she shut our exchange down. Like, *boom*. She handed the camera back, smiled, and thanked me. And then she went back to her books.

Oh, right: I failed to mention that she read a lot. I mean a *lot*, while sitting on the planters outside the cafeteria. And you know what? I can't remember the books. Damn.

Might as well add that she almost never smiled. When she did she never showed her textbook pearl teeth at all, and her lips were like a cinema star poster.

The next day I tried to talk with the future valedictorian again. With no expression, Aurora asked me to go away. She was cool about it, but she really didn't want to talk with me. She wasn't looking for a boyfriend, or even a friend. She just wanted to be in school. And read. *Alone*.

Okay?

Hate to admit, but I wasn't incredibly pleased...and yet, it didn't really bother me. I respected her space and was surprised we'd even talked at all, since I was way out of her social-dimensional league, as they say.

At that point, I let it and her go. And I never tried to talk with her again.

Maybe a month went by, and interest in her secrets faded among 7th and 8th graders. She maintained her straight-A status, but had no friends and was still polite.

Her fashions were always different of course, definitely cultural and international. Always stellar grade, always creative, always low-key. Her shoes became a thing of envy.

As scheduled, I did parts of my 7th grade in a tiny theatre class, run by a fantastic cool 60 year-old woman named Labrum (got a single pic I took with a Kodak 126 film camera, if interested). She ran a great group of actors, with outstanding *Dramatists Play Service* one acts and such. Indeed we had a good time, and such a spectrum of players.

Later I took a job in the school cafeteria during the day. Aurora came in as a customer(!) and ate purely vegetables. Didn't speak a word to me, except to order and say thanks. Hours after, I was fired. Seems I had an issue with some unknown 8th grader's fries on a plate, so I smashed 'em. He of course turned me in, and I was run outta the place on a rail. Lesson learned.

So then...

Word hit the school that a big amateur talent show was coming. There was also a rumor that Aurora would leave Jim Bridger sometime before the school year ended. How somebody figured that out is not clear.

Allow me to specify that the year had now turned to 1978, in the spring.

For me as a possible contender, the approaching talent show wasn't valid. I was doing theatre skits and solo dramatic monologue stuff, plus messing with the Sankyo on the roof...but the talent deal was strictly for singers, musicians, dancers.

Well, then.

Soon a student guy I knew, name of Barry, came up to me a few days before the talent show. He said Aurora was doing some kind of act in the program, and she wanted to talk to me right away.

Really? "I haven't talked to her in moons, man."

Barry said Aurora was in her typical planter/book-reading seat. Better hurry! So I of course moved out, and she's of course right in the science foyer planter spot.

Aurora saw me coming...and looked away. So I sat down and asked how she was doing. Uncomfortably, she said she was fine.

So I told her Barry sent me over. Why, she asked. I told her Barry said she wanted to talk to me. She shook her head. "No, that's not true at all." I felt like a Got-damned foole, and looked to my right where Barry and a couple other guys were standing next to a wall, laughing like hell. So I said to her, I'm sorry but it looks like they lied to me.

She didn't even answer. I got up and went to address the guys, but they split like rodents on the *Bantu Wind*. Bastards.

The next day I got some info on the upcoming talent gala. They had quite a few people prepped, saxophones, dancing, singing, drums...all kinds of stuff. So I bought a ticket, made so inexpensive by the school that it was practically free.

I scanned the schedule a bit more, and there was Aurora Smith's entry, an unspecified appearance called "Kashmir". Hm. No idea. Juggling? Pantomime?

The show arrived and off I went. It was held in the Jim Bridger gymnasium, which was converted to host a gathering like a theatre. Nice layout, actually.

I found out while coming in that virtually no one who'd appear on stage had actually ever rehearsed here. Only the lighting and tech crew had talked with each participant 48-hours beforehand, asking about design and needed tape music, if any.

I had a seat close to the stage. I thought it mighta been a ticket mistake, but wasn't concerned. Good seat; dead center.

The show started and it was one of those amateur talent things one might expect from 11 and 12 year-olds. Wasn't bad, but hey. Even as a 12 year-old myself it seemed...well...you know. The lighting and sound was surprisingly good, on the other hand. Lots of professional color, channels, spotlights, even a cucoloris.

Remember, it was Vegas. Often #1 stage talent did little gigs for family and all that. No surprise, for sure. And then the announcement: Aurora Smith, appearing in "Kashmir".

I kid you not, almost everyone in the house leaned forward a bit. Remember, Aurora had spent all her time being...Aurora. Didn't really know anyone, was an excellent student, was quiet...and remained a mystery.

The gym went almost 100% black. Shadowy and cool. Aurora approached the stage apron from the makeshift theatre wing, almost totally obscured. Couldn't really see her at all. She stopped in virtually no light, suddenly put both arms high above her head in a yoga-like stance.

Wait, is that *really* Aurora? The move she made, her first, was extremely pro and controlled. I had to think it was someone working with her.

Bang! I was wrong. Lights flash and bury the stage...and there's Aurora Smith, her opening pose like a 9,000 year-old sculpture you'd see in the Louvre.

Aurora was dressed in an elaborate Arabian genie outfit, four festooned limbs, no flesh exposed save a small bit of midsection. The wardrobe had brilliantly gold accents, light purple satin-like underpinnings, and more gold lamé on the rest of the outfit.

Then the music starts, blasting the classical fireworks "Lezghinka" from Khachaturian's Gayaneh Ballet. A fast-paced number. Wow.

All I can say is, mix Paula Abdul, Geoffrey Holder, and Twyla Tharp as choreographers, add lots of Janusz Kamiński flashing lights, and a thin elegant scimitar in Aurora's right hand...

Repeat.

Aurora moved with international precision, grace, structure, and timing. Her moves were truly hard to believe. So immensely talented, she reminded one of Olympians.

Everyone in the house dropped their jaws, so to speak, while Aurora gave a staggering, very adult performance of extreme skill. The Jim Bridger cadre were constantly looking at one another, wondering what it was they were seeing. I remember a science teacher turning to his pal and saying, "Is this for real?"

Yes, imagine if you will an awesome flamboyant genie, dressed in magnificence, dancing like a legend. You'd think there was no way that girl was 12...except, she was.

Myself? I laughed. Quietly. Truly this "Aurora" was living some other life outside Jim Bridger. Her abilities seemed well beyond normal reckoning. The moves were majorly fast and wildly coordinated. She was able to create arcs and shapes like a Slinky flying around under major control. As if the genie garb and herself were one.

As "Lezghinka" ended, Aurora folded to a sort of collapsed flower shape. Lights cut down and the place went dark...but still barely light enough to see Aurora jump up and run to the wing.

Lamps came on. There was a bit of silence before a huge thunder of applause, everyone standing, myself included. I mean, what I'd just seen wasn't like stuff from a TV reality show, or

whatever, with kids doing cheerleader moves as if they were “art”. It was like a master class on Broadway, or better. Maybe Bolshoi. Genuine, brilliant, passionate talent. Unreal.

Aurora did it. Proved she was a person from off-world, and such. Hah! A true apex. There was some other act after Aurora’s, but most people started filing out, hoping to see her leave the gym. Nobody did. She somehow slipped out and disappeared.

I mean, completely disappeared. She left Jim Bridger and wasn’t seen even catching a car or taxi. Just...gone. And off for who knows where. That was it. It was and is the last time I ever saw or heard Aurora Smith.

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It was discovered not too long after that “Aurora Smith” wasn’t even her real name. Not unexpected, for sure. At least not from me.

Anyway, years and years went on, and not only did I never tell anybody about the almost weird affair, it shined a lot of light on many forms of celebrity.

Who was her family? Lofty, no doubt, in *some* way. Not a single person from Jim Bridger, not even employees or teachers, ever seemed to figure it out who she really was.

My personal guess this many passages of sun later is, related to MGM emperor Kirk Kerkorian, aka “Father of the Mega-Resort”. This idea for various reasons, of course. For one, Kirk was super low-profile outside the Vegas business world. In town he even occasionally drove—wait for it—a station wagon with fake woody paneling on the side.

And I tell you for sure, Aurora’s eyes and mouth kinda looked like Kirk’s. But let’s not get too excited. It’s simply speculation.

Perhaps for the best.

End.